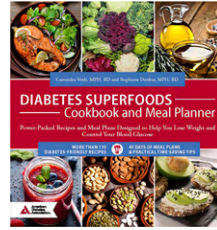




Diabetes Superfoods Cookbook and Meal Planner

Reviewed by Renza Scibilia



By Cassandra Verdi, MPH, RD, and Stephanie Dunbar, MPH, RD

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These days, the cooking and food sections of book stores are loaded with offerings that provide advice on how to eat healthfully. Wading through the options can be difficult, so a recipe book that provides simple, delicious, and easy-to-prepare foods will be a welcome choice for many.

Diabetes Superfoods Cookbook and Meal Planner by Cassandra Verdi and Stephanie Dunbar ticks a lot of those boxes. The recipes are stress-free to follow and primarily use ingredients that most people would typically stock as staples in their kitchen pantry, refrigerator, and freezer.

There is some disagreement around the term “superfood.” Many dietitians and other health care providers dispute those who claim that specific foods provide healing or exceptional health benefits. The idea that any food has magical or “super” qualities is certainly debatable, and without evidence; thus, the term is often relegated to the realm of Internet “wellness warriors,” who trade in detox formulas and green juice diets that have no real health benefits at all. The European Union actually banned the marketing of foods and other products as “superfoods” unless the claim was accompanied by credible scientific research.

In the context of this book, however, the authors have defined the term to mean “any food that 1) has a nutrient profile beneficial for diabetes management or 2) is rich in key nutrients that are typically lacking in the American diet.” They are not making assertions that any specific food has magical powers.

The “superfoods” incorporated in the book include berries and citrus fruits; tomatoes, leafy greens, and cruciferous vegetables; healthy fats; lean proteins; fish high in omega-3 fatty acids; legumes; low-fat dairy products; and whole

grains. Extra flavor is offered through the addition of herbs and spices.

People with diabetes are often told that there is no such thing as a specific “diabetes diet,” but rather, the best eating plan to follow is one that is aligned with evidence-based food guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and various dietetics professional organizations. Both authors of this book are dietitians, and the recipes and information they provide follow the nutrition recommendations included in the American Diabetes Association’s clinical practice guidelines.

The book begins with an overview of diabetes and nutrition and an explanation of how to create a healthy and balanced meal. There are helpful tips for managing portion sizes and a handy table offering suggestions for swapping out less healthful choices with foods that are lower in fat or sugar content.

The recipes in the book are accessible and easy to understand, with only a few requiring more than eight ingredients. Experienced cooks may find the straightforward, no-nonsense recipes too basic and not challenging enough, but those who are not so proficient in the kitchen will appreciate the simple instructions, most of which involve five or fewer steps. Because of its simplicity, this is a good selection for new cooks or as a way to get kids interested and involved in food preparation and healthful eating.

Recipe are divided into chapters on breakfast; dressings, sauces, and marinades; sandwiches, soups, and chilis; salads; snacks, appetizers, and desserts; main dishes; and side dishes. Frozen vegetables are included among the ingredients, and the microwave oven plays a role in preparation, both of which facilitate easy, quick, and convenient meal preparation. There are also some

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surprise ingredient combinations that one may not ordinarily consider would go together, such as a side dish recipe for sautéed spinach with strawberries.

Nutrition facts tables are provided for each recipe, as well as a guide to preparation and cooking time and servings. Each page contains only one recipe, making it easy to read, and several pages of bright, colorful illustrations are included.

For people looking for help establishing healthy eating habits, the pages dedicated to meal planning will be a huge bonus. The authors outline 8 weeks of meal plans,

combining recipes from the book with other food ideas. The plan is not repetitive and offers a variety of foods and beverages that bore anyone who may choose to follow the plan to the letter. Another clever feature is that leftovers from one day's plan are included in the following day's plan, which means that food preparation is quick and easy, and little goes to waste.

Diabetes Superfoods would be suitable for anyone looking to increase their intake of unprocessed and fresh foods, making it relevant for the whole family—not just people with diabetes.